



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

831 Massachusetts Avenue, 2nd Fl., Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Telephone: 617 349 4683 Fax: 617 349 3116 TTY: 617 349 6112

E-mail: histcomm@cambridgema.gov URL: <http://www.cambridgema.gov/Historic>

William B. King, *Chair*, Bruce A. Irving, *Vice Chair*, Charles M. Sullivan, *Executive Director*

M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert G. Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Frank Shirley, Jo M. Solet, *Members*

Shary Page Berg, Joseph V. Ferrara, Susannah Barton Tobin, *Alternates*

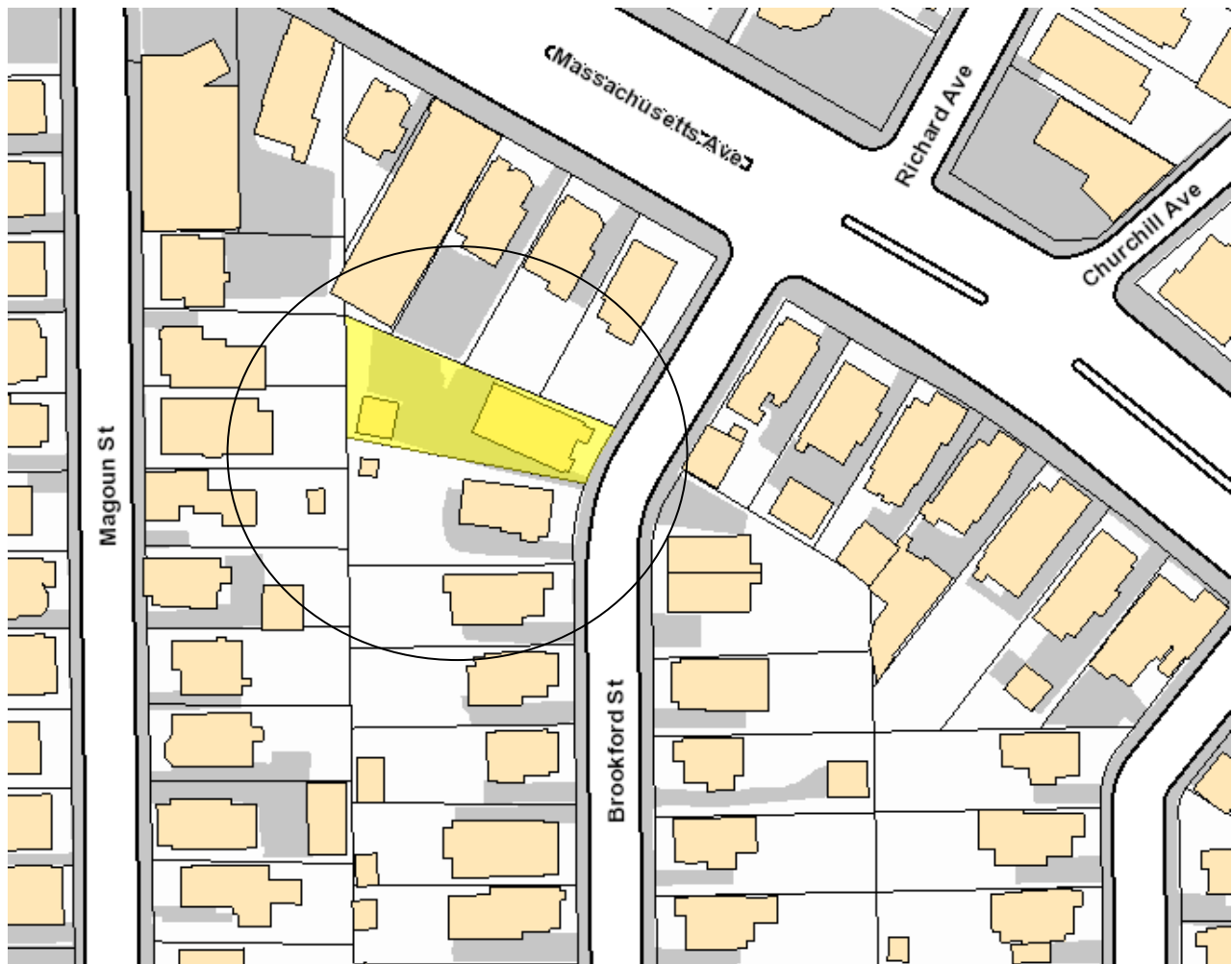
September 2, 2011

To: Members of the Historical Commission

From: Charles Sullivan, Executive Director

Re: D-1236: Cloutier-Fitzgerald house, 11 Brookford Street

An application to demolish the house at 11 Brookford Street was received on July 26, 2011. The applicant was notified of an initial determination of significance and a public hearing was scheduled for September 8, 2011.



Cloutier-Fitzgerald house, 11 Brookford Street (189/8). Cambridge GIS, Assessor's map.

Site

The Cloutier-Fitzgerald house at 11 Brookford Street is located on the west side of Cottage Park Avenue near Massachusetts Avenue. It occupies a 6,450 square foot lot (Map 189/Lot 8) that measures approximately 35' wide at the street, 65' wide at the rear, and 150' deep. The assessors value the land at \$247,800 and the building at \$175,500.

Eleven Brookford Street is located in a Residence B district, which is a two-family and townhouse district that allows an FAR of .5, a height limit of 35', and up to 17 dwelling units per acre (at 2,500 square feet per unit. The owner wishes to replace the house with a two-unit townhouse.

Architectural Description

Eleven Brookford Street originated in 1894 as a 2½-story, sidehall, wood frame house with the gable end facing the street, one of three identical houses erected at that time. In 1905 it was extended to the rear, and in 1930 a new entrance was added to the left side. The façade is now somewhat asymmetrical, with two gabled porches balancing the composition. Three-part windows on the first and second floors probably date from 1930. The exterior is covered in wood shingles, and the house appears to be in fair to good condition.



Cloutier-Fitzgerald house, 11 Brookford Street. Cambridge Assessor's photo

History

The outer reaches of today's Massachusetts Avenue was once a tract of common land known as the Ox Pasture. Granted to individuals in the division of 1703, the area was mostly settled by the extended Dickson family, various branches of which occupied four small farms near the intersection of Churchill Avenue. Walter Dickson's 7.5-acre farm survived the longest, although it was slightly truncated by the Lexington & Arlington R.R. in 1870. The railroad's North Cambridge station at the Massachusetts Avenue crossing somewhat mitigated the area's remoteness, but homeowners were still reluctant to settle on in a vicinity still called "poverty plain" because of its susceptibility to flooding and proximity to the Almshouse and tanneries near Alewife Brook.

The Dickson farm came into play after the Civil War, but was not developed until Francis B. Henderson, a real estate dealer and builder associated with the Henderson family of carriage builders, laid out Brookford Street and Cottage Park Avenue in 1887 with about thirty house lots averaging 4,500 square feet. The first few houses were built in 1887, but the area did not see much activity until 1890, when the street railway leading to Arlington Center was electrified. Lower fares and faster travel time brought the area within reach of working-class families in East Cambridge and Boston, and on February 14, 1891 the *Cambridge Tribune* reported that

since September Mr. Francis B. Henderson has increased his colony of houses on Brookford Street by the addition of half a dozen. They are each 20 by 24 feet, with a small ell, and two stories and a half high, and are designed for people of very moderate means.

Eleven Brookford was in the last group of five houses that Henderson built on Brookford Street in 1894. It was purchased by Joseph Cloutier and his wife Margaret. Joseph, a waiter who worked in Boston, was born in Quebec in 1868; Margaret was born in Ireland in 1865. They shared one floor of the house with three children and a boarder. The rest of the house was occupied by a succession of tenants; in 1900, this was the household of James Kelly, a railroad blacksmith, and his wife, two children, and mother-in-law. Other tenants during this period included a gardener, a baker, a paperhanger, and a painter.

In 1905 the Cloutiers expanded the house by building a two story, 25' by 14' addition on the back, along with a two story porch. They remained in possession until about 1918; by 1921, the owner was John J. Fitzgerald, a clerk and bookkeeper who prospered sufficiently to remodel the house in 1930, adding the current left-side entrance and the two entrance porches. Fitzgerald's heirs sold the property to the current owners, the Reynolds family, about 1972.

Significance and Recommendation

The Cloutier-Fitzgerald house at 11 Brookford Street is significant for its associations with the architectural and social history of the city, as a late-19th century working-class residence that represents the early evolution of this distant part of Cambridge. I recommend that the Commission find the building significant and examine the applicant's plans to determine whether it should be found preferably preserved.